

Chapter 26
***The Great West and
the Agricultural
Revolution,
1865–1896***

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I. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains

- Clash between Indians and advancing white pioneers:
 - Migration and conflict:
 - Comanches drove Apaches off central plains into upper Rio Grande valley in 18th century
 - Harried by Mandans and Chippewas, the Cheyenne had abandoned villages along Mississippi and Missouri Rivers a century before the Civil War
 - The Sioux, displaced from Great Lakes woodlands in the 18th century emerged onto the plains to prey upon Crows, Kiowas, and Pawnees

I. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains (cont.)

- White soldiers and settlers on the plains:
 - Accelerated fateful cycle of fierce enmities among Indians
 - Ultimately undermined foundations of Native American culture
 - Spread cholera, typhoid, and smallpox among native peoples of the plains, with devastating results
 - Put pressure on steadily shrinking bison population by hunting and by grazing their livestock on prairie grasses



I. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains (cont.)

– Federal government:

- Tried to pacify Plains Indians by signing treaties with “chiefs” of various “tribes” at Fort Laramie (1851) and at Fort Atkinson (1853)
- Treaties marked beginnings of **reservation system** in the West:
 - Established boundaries for territory of each tribe
 - Attempted to separate Indians into great “colonies” to north and south of a corridor of intended white settlement
 - White treaty makers:
 - » Misunderstood both Indian government and Indian society

I. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains (cont.)

- » “Tribes” and “chiefs” often fictions of white imagination
- » Many Native Americans recognized only authority of their immediate families or a band elder
- » Nomadic culture of Plains Indians utterly alien to concept of living out one's life in confinement of a defined territory
- In 1860s federal government intensified policy and herded Indians into still-smaller confines:
 - Principally “Great Sioux reservation” in Dakota Territory and Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma)

I. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains (cont.)

- Indians surrendered ancestral lands:
 - When they received solemn promises from Washington
 - They would be left alone
 - They would be provided food, clothing, and other supplies
 - Regretfully, federal Indian agents often very corrupt
 - For more than a decade after the Civil War:
 - Fierce warfare between Indians and U.S. Army raged in various part of West (see Map 26.1)
 - Many Army troops were immigrants
 - Fully 1/5 of all U.S. Army personnel were African American—dubbed “Buffalo Soldiers” by Indians



II. Receding Native Population

- Indian wars in West often savage clashes:
 - At Sand Creek, Colorado (1864), Colonel J.M. Chivington's militia massacred 400 Indians
 - Women shot praying for mercy
 - Children had brains dashed out
 - Braves tortured, scalped, and mutilated
- Cruelty begot cruelty
 - “Fetterman's annihilation” in 1866 was violent slaughter of 81 whites by Sioux



II. Receding Native Population (cont.)

- Fetterman massacre led to one of the few (though short-lived) Indian triumphs in plains wars:
 - Battle of the Little Bighorn
- Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868):
 - Government abandoned Bozeman Trail
 - “Great Sioux reservation” guaranteed to Sioux Tribes
- 1874 another round of warfare with Plains Indians:
 - Custer led “scientific” expedition into Black Hills, South Dakota and announced he found gold
 - Hordes of greedy gold-seekers swarmed into Sioux lands
 - Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians took to warpath, inspired by Sitting Bull

II. Receding Native Population (cont.)

- General Custer's seventh Cavalry
 - Set out to suppress Indians and return them to reservation
 - Attacked 2,500 well-armed warriors along Little Bighorn River in present-day Montana
 - “White Chief with Yellow Hair” and his 250 officers and men completely wiped out in 1876
 - Indians' victory short-lived
 - Army hunted down Indians who had humiliated Custer

II. Receding Native Population (cont.)

- In 1877 a band of Nez Perce Indians in northeastern Oregon goaded into flight
 - When U.S. authorities tried to herd them onto a reservation
 - Chief Joseph surrendered with his 700 Indians after a tortuous, 1,700 mile three month trek across Continental Divide toward Canada
 - Nez sent to dusty reservation in Kansas, where 40% died from disease
 - Survivors eventually allowed to return to Idaho
- Fierce Apache tribes of Arizona and New Mexico led by Geronimo most difficult to subdue:
 - Pursued into Mexico by U.S. troops

II. Receding Native Population (cont.)

- Federal troops used sunflashing heliography, a communication device that impressed Indians as “big medicine”
- Scattered remnants of warriors finally persuaded to surrender after Apache women exiled to Florida
- Apaches ultimately became successful farmers in Oklahoma
- Relentless fire-and-sword policy of whites at last shattered spirit of Indians:
 - » Vanquished Indians ghettoized on reservations
 - » Compelled to sullen existence as wards of government

II. Receding Native Population (cont.)

- “Taming” of Indians engineered by:
 - Federal government’s willingness to back its land claims with military force
 - Railroad, which shot an iron arrow through heart of West
 - » Locomotives could transport unlimited numbers of troops, farmers, cattlemen, sheepherders, and settlers
 - Indians ravaged by white people’s disease, to which they had little resistance, and by firewater, which they could resist even less
 - Virtual extermination of buffalo doomed Plains Indians’ nomadic way of life



III. Bellowing Herds of Bison

- Buffalo—
 - Tens of millions—described as “hunchback cows”—blackened western prairies, when white Americans first arrived:
 - Shaggy animals staff of life for Native Americans:
 - Their flesh provided food
 - Their hides provided clothes, lariats, and harnesses
 - Their dried dung provided “buffalo chips”
 - When Civil War ended, 15 million of these meaty beasts still grazed on western plains



III. Bellowing Herds of Bison (cont.)

- Effect of railroads:
 - Had sometimes to wait up to eight hours for herd of buffalo to cross tracks
 - Much of food supply for railroad construction gangs came from buffalo steaks
 - William “Buffalo Bill” Cody killed over 4,000 animals in 18 months while employed by Kansas Pacific
- With the building of the railroad:
 - The massacre of herds began in earnest
 - Creatures slain for hides, tongues, or amusement
 - “Sportsmen” on trains leaned out windows and blazed away at animals

II. Bellowing Herds of Bison (cont.)

- Wholesale butchery left fewer than a thousand buffalo alive by 1885
- Once-numerous beasts in danger of complete extinction
- Shocking example of greed and waste that accompanied conquest of continent

IV. The End of the Trail

- By 1880s, national conscience began to stir uneasily over plight of Indians:
 - Helen Hunt Jackson:
 - Pricked moral sense of Americans in 1881 with *A Century of Dishonor*:
 - Chronicled sorry record of government ruthlessness and chicanery in dealing with Indians
 - *Ramona* (1884):
 - Love story about discrimination against California Indians
 - Inspired sympathy for Indians

IV. The End of the Trail (cont.)

- Debate seesawed:
 - Humanitarians wanted to treat Indians kindly and persuade them to “walk the white man's road”
 - Hard-liners insisted on current policy of forced containment and brutal punishment
 - Neither side respected Native American culture
 - Christian reformers:
 - Often administered educational facilities on reservations

IV. The End of the Trail (cont.)

- Sometimes withheld food to force Indians to give up tribal religions and assimilate to white society
- In 1884 zealous white souls joined with military to persuade U.S. government to outlaw sacred Sun Dance
- **Battle of Wounded Knee:**
 - In 1880 when “Ghost Dance” cult spread to Dakota Sioux, army bloodily stamped it out
 - In the fighting, an estimated 200 men, women, and children killed
 - As well as 29 invading soldiers

IV. The End of the Trail (cont.)

- **Dawes Severalty Act (1887):**
 - Misbegotten offspring of movement to reform Indian policy
 - Reflecting forced-civilization view of reformers:
 - Act dissolved many tribes as legal entities
 - Wiped out tribal ownership of land
 - Set up individual Indian family heads with 160 free acres
 - If Indians behaved like “good white settlers,” they would get full title to holdings as well as citizenship in 25 years

IV. The End of the Trail (cont.)

- Former reservation land not allotted to Indians under Dawes Act:
 - Sold to railroads and white settlers
 - With proceeds used by federal government to educate and “civilize” native peoples:
 - Government-funded Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania where Native American children were:
 - » Separated from their tribes
 - » Taught English
 - » Inculcated with white values and customs
 - In 1890s government expanded its network of Indian boarding schools:

IV. The End of the Trail (cont.)

- Sent “field matrons” to reservations:
 - » To teach Native American women art of sewing
 - » To preach virtues of chastity and hygiene
- Dawes Act:
 - Struck directly at tribal organization:
 - Tried to make rugged individualists out of Indians
 - Ignored traditional reliance of Indian culture on tribally held land
 - By 1900 Indians had lost 50% of the 156 million acres they held (see Map 26.2)
 - Forced-assimilation doctrine of Dawes Act remained cornerstone of government policy for decades

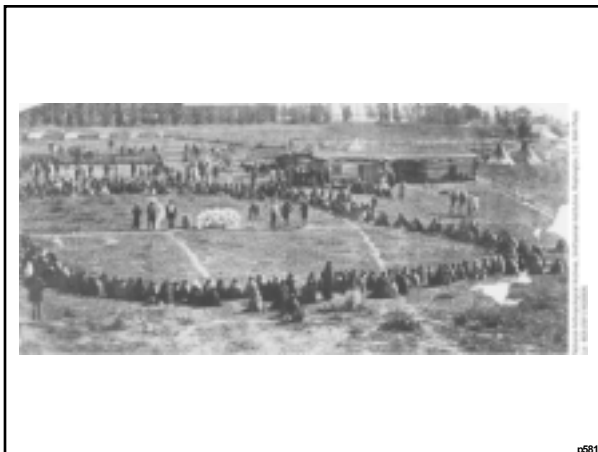
IV. The End of the Trail (cont.)

- Indian Reorganization Act (“Indian New Deal”) of 1934:
 - Partially reversed individualistic approach
 - Tried to restore tribal basis of Indian life (see Chap. 32)
- Indian population started to recover slowly:
 - Total number reduced by 1887 to about 243,000—the results of bullets, bottles, bacteria
 - Census of 2000 counted more than 1.5 million Native Americans, urban and rural

V. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker

- Conquest of Indians and the railroads were life-giving boons to mining frontier:
 - Golden gravel of California continued to yield "pay dirt"
 - In 1858 an electrifying discovery convulsed on Colorado
 - Avid "fifty-niners" or "Pikes Peakers" rushed to Rockies, but there were more miners than minerals
 - Many gold-grubbers with "Pikes Peak or Bust" inscribed on covered wagons going, creaked back with "Busted, by Gosh"
 - Some stayed to strip away silver deposits
 - Others to farm grain



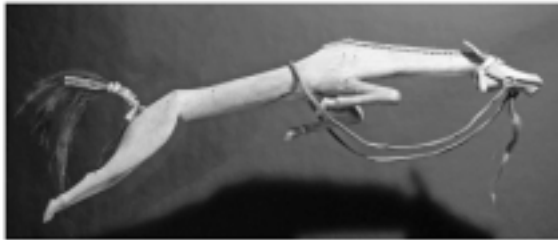


V. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker (cont.)

- “Fifty-niners” also poured into Nevada in 1859:
 - After fabulous Comstock Lode discovered
 - Gold and silver worth about \$340 million mined by “Kings of the Comstock,” 1860-1890
 - Scantily populated state of Nevada, “child of Comstock Lode”:
 - » Prematurely railroaded into Union in 1864
 - » Partly to provide 3 electoral votes for President Lincoln
- Montana, Idaho, and other western states:
 - “Lucky strikes” drew frantic gold and silver seekers
 - Boomtowns or “Helldorados” sprouted up on desert sands
 - Every third cabin a saloon



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V. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker (cont.)

- Lynch law and vigilante justice tried to preserve crude semblance of order
- When “diggings” petered out, gold-seekers decamped, leaving “ghost towns”—Virginia City, Nevada
- Begun with a boom, these towns ended with a whimper
- Age of business came to **mining industry**:
 - Impersonal corporations with costly machinery and trained engineers replaced former miners and mining
 - Once-independent gold-washer became just another day laborer



V. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker (cont.)

- Mining frontier played vital role in conquering continent:
 - Magnet-like, it attracted population and wealth
 - While advertising wonders of Wild West
 - Women and men found opportunities
 - Running boardinghouses or working as prostitutes
 - With frontier equality, women won right to vote:
 - Wyoming (1869), Utah (1870), Colorado (1893), Idaho (1896)—long before women in East could vote

V. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker (cont.)

- Amassing precious metals:
 - Helped finance Civil War
 - Facilitated building railroads
 - Intensified bitter conflict between whites and Indians
 - Enabled Treasury to resume specie payments (1879)
 - Injected silver issue into American politics
- Mining frontier added to American folklore and literature: Bret Harte and Mark Twain

VI. Beef Bonanzas and the Long Drive

- Problem of cattle marketing on Plains:
 - How to get cattle to market:
 - Solved by transcontinental railroads
 - Cattle could now be shipped live to stockyards
 - Under “beef barons” like Swifts and Armour:
 - Highly industrialized meatpacking business sprang into existence as a main pillar of economy
 - In gigantic stockyards at Kansas City and Chicago, meatpackers shipped fresh products to East Coast in newly perfected refrigerator cars

VI. Beef Bonanzas and the Long Drive (cont.)

- Spectacular feeder of new slaughterhouses was “Long Drive” (see Map 26.3)
 - Texas cowboys (black, white, and Mexican) drove herds of 1,000 to 10,000 cattle over unfenced and unpeopled plains to a railroad terminal
 - Beasts grazed en route on free government grass
 - Favorite terminal points were flyspecked “cow town”
 - Steer was king in Cattle Kingdom richly carpeted with grass. Lush grass made Long Drive profitable
 - 1866-1888, more than four million cattle moved by Long Drive

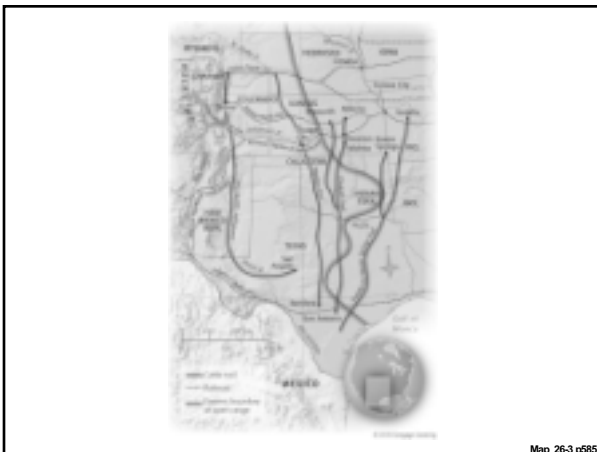
VI. Beef Bonanzas and the Long Drive (cont.)

- Railroads made Long Drive, and railroads unmade Long Drive
- Same rails that bore cattle from open range brought out homesteaders and sheepherders:
 - Intruders too numerous to be cut down by cowboys
 - Terrible winter of 1886-1887 left thousands of cattle starving and freezing
- Overexpansion and overgrazing took toll, as cowboys slowly gave way to plowboys
 - Only escape for stockmen was to make cattle-raising a big business and avoid perils of overproduction

VI. Beef Bonanzas and the Long Drive (cont.)

- Breeders learned:
 - » To fence their ranches and lay in winter feed
 - » Import prize bulls; produce fewer and meatier animals
 - » To organize: Wyoming Stock-Growers' Association (1880s) virtually controlled state and its legislature
- Heyday of cowboys:
 - Equipment of cowhand served useful purpose
 - Could justifiably boast of his toughness
 - Bowlegged Knights of Saddle became part of American folklore
 - Many cowboys were blacks, who enjoyed freedom of open range



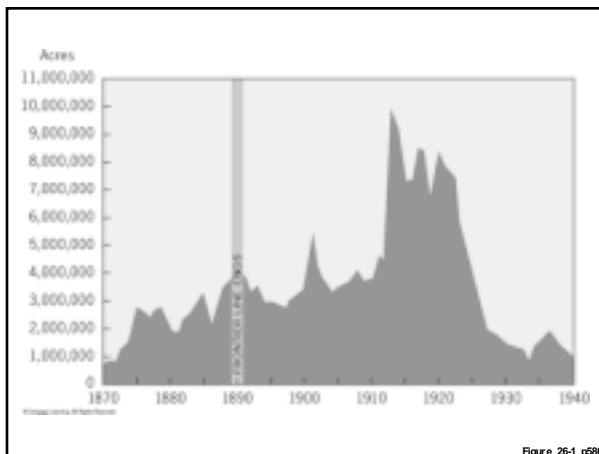


VII. The Farmers' Frontier

- Sober sodbuster wrote final chapter of frontier history:
 - **Homestead Act (1862):**
 - Allowed a settler to acquire as much as 160 acres of land (a quarter-section) by living on it for five years, improving it, and paying nominal fee of about \$30
 - Marked drastic departure from previous policy:
 - Before act, public land had been sold for revenue
 - Now given away to encourage rapid filling of empty space
 - Provide stimulus to family farm—"backbone of democracy"

VII. The Farmers' Frontier (cont.)

- A godsend to farmers who could not afford to buy large holdings
- About 500,000 families took advantage of Homestead Act to carve out new homes
- Yet five times that many families *purchased* land from railroads, land companies, or states (see Figure 26.1)
- Homestead Act often turned out to be a cruel hoax
 - Standard 160 acres frequently proved inadequate on rain-scarce Great Plains
 - Thousands of homesteaders forced to give up struggle against drought



VII. The Farmers' Frontier (cont.)

- Fraud spawned by Homestead Act and similar laws:
 - » More land gained by speculators, than actual farmers
 - » Corporations used “dummy” homesteaders to grab best properties
 - » Settlers would swear they had “improved” property by erecting a “twelve by fourteen” dwelling, which turned out to measure twelve by fourteenth *inches*
- Railroads played major role in developing agricultural West:
 - Largely through profitable marketing of crops
 - Railroad companies induced Americans and European immigrants to buy cheap land

VII. The Farmers' Frontier (cont.)

- “Sodbusters” built homes from very sod they dug from ground
- Some pushed farther onto marginal lands beyond 100th meridian
- Area separated two climatological regions:
 - » A well-watered area to east
 - » A semiarid area to west (see Map 26.4)
- Many went broke west of 100th meridian
- “Dry farming” eventually took root on plains:
 - Shallow cultivation supposedly adapted to arid West
 - Overtime, “dry farming” created finely pulverized surface soil
 - Contributed to notorious “Dust Bowl” later (see Chap. 32)



VII. The Farmer's Frontier (cont.)

- Other adaptations to western environments more successful:
 - Tough strains of wheat imported from Russia
 - Wise farmers abandoned corn for sorghum and grains
 - Barbed wire, perfected by Joseph F. Glidden (1874), solved problem of building fences on treeless plains
 - Federally financed irrigation projects caused Great American Desert to bloom:
 - Arching dams tamed Missouri and Columbia Rivers
 - 45 million acres irrigated in 17 western states

VII. The Farmer's Frontier (cont.)

- Hydraulic engineers had more to do with shaping modern West than all trappers, miners, cavalymen, and cowboys (see Map 26.5)



VIII. The Far West Comes of Age

- Great West experienced fantastic surge in migration from 1870s to 1890s:
 - Parade of new western states joined Union:
 - Colorado, 1876—“the Centennial State”
 - 1889-1890—six new states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming
 - After Mormon Church banned polygamy in 1890, Utah admitted in 1896

VIII. The Far West Comes of Age (cont.)

- Oklahoma, “the Beautiful Land:”
 - Scores of overeager and well-armed “sooners” illegally entered Oklahoma Territory
 - Had to be evicted repeatedly by federal troops
 - All was ready legally on April 22, 1889 and some 50,000 “boomers” poised expectantly on boundary line
 - At noon, a horde of “eighty-niners” poured in
 - That night, city of Guthrie, with more than 10,000 people, born
 - End of 1889, Oklahoma boasted 60,000 inhabitants, and Congress made it a territory
 - In 1907 it became “Sooner State”

IX. The Fading Frontier

- In 1890—a watershed date
 - Superintendent of census announced:
 - For first time in America's experience, a frontier line no longer discernible
 - “Closing” of frontier inspired one of most influential essays ever written about American history
 - Frederick Jackson Turner's “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” in 1893
 - Secretary of war prophesied in 1827 that five hundred years would be needed to fill West



IX. The Fading Frontier (cont.)

- Nation soon recognized that land not inexhaustible:
 - Actions taken to preserve vanishing resources
 - Government set aside land for national parks—first Yellowstone in 1872, followed by Yosemite and Sequoia in 1890
- Frontier more than a place:
 - Also a state of mind; a symbol of opportunity
 - Its passing ended romantic phase of nation's internal development
 - Created new economic and psychological problems
- Frontier as “safety valve:”
 - Theory that when hard times came, unemployed who cluttered city moved west, took up farming, and prospered

IX. The Fading Frontier (cont.)

- Truth about “safety valve”:
 - Few city dwellers migrated to frontier during depressions
 - Most didn't know how to farm
 - Few could raise enough money to transport themselves west and then pay for livestock and expensive machinery
- Does have some validity:
 - Free acreage did lure to West a host of immigrants farmers
 - Very *possibility* of western migration may have induced urban employers to maintain wage rates high enough to discourage workers from leaving
- Real safety valve by late nineteenth century in cities like Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco:

IX. The Fading Frontier (cont.)

- Where failed farmers, busted miners, and displaced easterners found ways to seek their fortunes
- After 1880, area from Rocky Mountains to Pacific Coast most urbanized region in America
- Trans-Mississippi West formed a distinct chapter:
 - Native Americans waged their last and most desperate struggle against colonization
 - Where most Native Americans live today
 - There “Anglo” culture collided most directly with Hispanic culture for dominance in New World
 - Southwest remains most Hispanicized region in America

IX. The Fading Frontier (cont.)

- There Americans faced across Pacific to Asia, and there most Asians American dwell today
- Severity of environment there:
 - » Posed largest challenges to human abilities
 - » Its aridity and still-magical emptiness, continues to mold social and political life
- In no other region has federal government:
 - » With its vast landholdings, its subsidies to railroads, its massive irrigation projects played so conspicuous a role in economic and social development

IX. The Fading Frontier (cont.)

- Mystical proportions in American mind:
 - Immortalized by:
 - » Writers such as Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Helen Hunt Jackson, Francis Parkman
 - » Painters such as George Catlin, Frederic Remington, Albert Bierstadt
 - For better or worse, pioneers planted seeds of American civilization in immense western wilderness
 - The life we live, they dreamed of; the life they lived, we can only dream

X. The Farm Becomes a Factory

- Farming changed with growing single “cash” crops, such as wheat or corn:
 - Used profits to buy foodstuffs at general store
 - And manufactured goods in town or by mail order
 - Chicago firm of Aaron Montgomery Ward sent out its first catalogue—a single sheet—in 1872
- Farmers becoming consumers and producers
- Large-scale farmers now specialists and businesspeople
 - Intimately tied to banking, railroading, and manufacturing
 - Had to buy expensive machinery to plant and harvest crops
 - A powerful steam engine could drag behind it simultaneously the plow, seeder, and harrow

X. The Farm Becomes a Factory (cont.)

- Speed of harvesting dramatically increased in 1880s by “combine”—combined reaper-thresher
- Widespread use of such equipment required first-class management
- **Mechanization of agriculture:**
 - Drove many farmers off land
 - Miracles of production, made America world's breadbasket and butcher shop
 - Farm attained status of factory—an outdoor grain factory
 - Bonanza wheat farms of Minnesota-North Dakota enormous
 - » Foreshadowed gigantic agribusinesses of 1900s

X. The Farm Becomes a Factory (cont.)

- **Agriculture big business in California:**
 - Phenomenally productive Central Valley
 - California's farms three times larger than national average
 - With advent of railroad refrigerator car in 1880s, California fruits and vegetable, raised on sprawling tracts by ill-paid migrant Mexican and Chinese farmhands, sold at handsome profit in urban markets of East





XI. Deflation Dooms the Debtor

- Farmers' financial situations:
 - As long as prices stayed high all went well
 - Grain farmers no longer masters of their destinies:
 - Price of product determined in world market by world output
 - Low prices and a deflated currency were chief worries of frustrated farmers
 - Deflationary pinch on debtor flowed partly from static money supply:
 - Simply not enough dollars to go around, and as a result, prices forced down



XI. Deflation Dooms the Debtor (cont.)

– Farmers caught on a treadmill:

- Operated year after year at a loss and lived off their fat as best they could
- Farm machinery increased output of grain, lowered the price, and drove them deeper into debt
- Mortgages engulfed homesteads at an alarming rate
- Ruinous rates of interest, running from 8 to 40%, charged on mortgages
- Sons and daughters cried out in despair against loan sharks and Wall Street octopus
- Farm tenancy, rather than farm ownership, spread

XII. Unhappy Farmers

– Even Mother nature conspired against farmers:

- Mile-wide clouds of grasshoppers left “nothing but the mortgage”
- Cotton-boll weevil wreaked havoc in South by 1890s
- Good earth going sour:
 - Floods added to erosion
 - Expensive fertilizers urgently needed
 - Long successions of drought seared land
- Farmers gouged by governments:
 - Local, state and national over-assessed their land, causing them to pay painful local taxes, high protective tariffs

XII. Unhappy Farmers (cont.)

- Farmers “farmed” by corporations and processors
- At mercy of harvester trust, barbed-wire trust and fertilizer trust—all who controlled output and raised prices to extortionate levels
- Middlemen took juicy “cut”
- Railroad octopus had grain growers in their grip
- Farmers still made up 1/2 of population in 1890:
 - Hopelessly disorganized
 - Farmers by nature independent and individualistic
 - Never organized successfully to restrict production until forced to do so by Roosevelt’s New Deal
 - What they did manage to organize was a monumental political uprising



XIII. The Farmers Take Their Stand

- Agrarian unrest:
 - First flared with Greenback movement:
 - Farmers unsuccessfully demanded in 1868 relief from high prices and high indebtedness by calling for inflation of currency with paper
 - National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry—better known as the Grange
 - Organized in 1876, with help of Oliver H. Kelley
 - First objective was to enhance lives of isolated farmers through social, educational, and fraternal activities
 - Grange’s picnics, concerts, and lectures a god-send to isolated farmers
 - Claimed 800,000 members, chiefly in Midwest and South

XIII. The Farmers Take Their Stand (cont.)

- Grangers raised their goals:
 - From individual self-improvement to improvement of farmers' collective plight
 - Established cooperatively owned stores for consumers
 - Cooperatively owned grain elevators and warehouses for producers
 - Attempted to manufacture harvesting machinery
- Embittered Grangers went into politics:
 - Chiefly in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota
 - Through legislation they strove to:
 - » Regulate railway rates and storage fees
 - » Some Granger Laws badly written



XIII. The Farmers Take Their Stand (cont.)

- Following judicial reverses, chiefly by Supreme Court in *Wabash* case of 1886 (see Chap 24), Granger influence faded
- Organization lived on as vocal champion of farm interests, while brightening rural life with social activities
- Farmers' grievances found vent in Greenback Labor party:
 - Combined inflationary appeal with program for improving lot of labor
 - High-water mark of movement in 1878:
 - » Polled over a million votes and elected fourteen members of Congress
 - » Presidential election of 1880, Greenbackers ran James Weaver, but only polled 3% of total popular vote

XIV. Prelude to Populism

– Farmer's Alliance:

- Founded in Texas in late 1870s (see Chap. 23)
- A striking manifestation of rural discontent
- Farmers came together to break grip of railroads and manufacturers through cooperative buying and selling
- By 1890 members numbered more than a million
- Movement weakened itself by ignoring plight of landless tenant farmers, sharecroppers and farmworkers
- Even more debilitating was exclusion of blacks, who were nearly half the agricultural population of South

XIV. Prelude to Populism (cont.)

• In 1880s separate Colored Farmers' National Alliance:

- Emerged to attract black farmers
- By 1890 had membership of 250,000
- Long history of racial division in South made it difficult for white and black farmers to work together

– Populists: the People's party

• Frustrated farmers attacked "money trust;" called for:

- Nationalizing railroads, telephone, and telegraph
- A graduated income tax
- A new federal "subtreasury" to provide loans to farmers
- Wanted free and unlimited coinage of silver

XIV. Prelude to Populism (cont.)

• Many fiery prophets for Populist cause:

- Free coinage of silver struck many Populists as cure-all
- *Coin's Financial School* (1894) by William Hope Harvey:
 - » Enormously popular pamphlet for free silver
- Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, elected three times to Congress
- Mary Elizabeth Lease—queen of Populist "calamity howlers"

- Populists leading deadly earnest and impassioned campaign to relieve farmers' many miseries
- Earned more than a million votes in 1892 presidential election for their candidate, James Weaver



XV. Coxey's Army and the Pullman Strike

- Populists saw potential political allies:
 - Coxey's Army:
 - Most famous marcher was “General” Jacob S. Coxey:
 - Set out for Washington, D. C. in 1894
 - Platform demanded government relieve unemployment by an inflationary public works program
 - » Supported by \$500 million in legal tender notes to be issued by Treasury
 - Coxey and his marches arrested as they entered Washington



XV. Coxey's Army and the Pullman Strike (cont.)

- Violent flare-ups accompanied labor protests, notably in Chicago—**Pullman strike** of 1894:
 - Eugene V. Debs organized American Railway Union of 150,000 members:
 - Pullman Palace Car Company, hit hard by depression, cut wages by about 1/3, but kept rents same:
 - Workers finally struck
 - American Federation of Labor declined to support strike
 - Governor John Peter Altgeld of Illinois:
 - » A friend of the downtrodden (had pardoned Haymarket Square anarchists the year before) didn't see strike as out of hand

XV. Coxey's Army and the Pullman Strike (cont.)

- Attorney General Richard Olney:
 - » Archconservative and an ex-railroad attorney urged dispatch of federal troops
 - » His legal grounds were strike interfered with U.S. mail
 - » President Cleveland supported Olney
 - » To delight of conservatives, federal troops, bayonets fixed, crushed Pullman strike
 - » Debs sentenced to six months' imprisonment for contempt of court because he defied a federal injunction to cease striking
- Embittered cries of "government by injunction" burst from organized labor
 - » First time this legal weapon used to break a strike



XVI. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan

- Election of 1896:
 - Leading Republican candidate William McKinley:
 - » Sponsored tariff bill of 1890
 - » Creditable Civil War record
 - » Hailed from potent state of Ohio
 - » Long years of honorable service in Congress
 - As a presidential candidate, McKinley the creature of fellow Ohioan, businessman Marcus Alonzo Hanna:
 - » Coveted role of president maker
 - » Wholehearted Hamiltonian, Hanna believed prime function of government was to aid business
 - » Became personification of big industry in politics
 - » Believed prosperity “trickled down” to laborer



XVI. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan (cont.)

- Republican convention:
 - Hanna organized preconvention campaign for McKinley with consummate skill and liberal outpouring of his own money
 - McKinley nominated on first ballot in St. Louis
 - Convention:
 - » Declared for gold standard
 - » Condemned hard times and Democratic incapacity
 - » Praised protective tariff
- Democratic camp in dissension:
 - Cleveland no longer led his party:
 - » Depression drove last nail into his political coffin
 - » “The Stuffed Prophet” most unpopular man in country

XVI. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan (cont.)

- Cleveland remembered by labor-debtor groups for:
 - His intervention in Pullman strike
 - His intervention in backstairs Morgan bond deal
 - His stubborn hard-money policies
- Ultraconservative in finance, Cleveland looked more Republican than Democrat on money issue
- Democratic convention met in Chicago, July 1896:
 - Delegates by vote of 564 to 357 refused to endorse their own administration
 - Had enthusiasm and numbers; all they lacked was a leader
 - New Moses appeared in person of William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska, known as “Boy Orator of the Platte”

XVI. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan (cont.)

- Radiated honesty, sincerity, and energy
- Delivered fervent plea for silver
 - » Cross of Gold speech a sensation
- Nominated next day on fifth ballot
- Platform demanded inflation through unlimited coinage of silver at ratio of 16 ounces of silver to 1 of gold
 - » Market ratio about 32 to 1
 - » Meant silver in a dollar would be worth fifty cents
- Democratic party members:
 - Some bolted party over silver issue
 - Charged the Populist-silverites had stolen both name and clothes of the party

XVI. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan (cont.)

- Populists now faced dilemma:
 - Democrats had appropriated their main plank—“16 to 1” that “heaven-born ratio”
 - Bulk of Populists, fearing hard-money McKinley endorsed “fusion” with Democrats and Bryan for president
 - Sacrificed their identity in mix
 - Handful of original Populists refused to support Bryan



XVII. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders

– Campaign issues:

- Hanna assumed it would be tariff
- Bryan campaigned widely on behalf of free silver:
 - Created panic among eastern conservatives
 - “Gold Bugs” responded with unlimited coinage of verbal attacks on Bryan as “madman,” etc.
- Republicans:
 - McKinleyites amassed most formidable campaign chest thus far in U.S. history by fundraising from trusts and plutocrats:
 - » At all levels—national, state, local—amounted to about \$16 million
 - » In contrast to \$1 million Democrats raised



XVII. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders (cont.)

- » Bryanites accused Hanna of buying election and of floating McKinley to White House on tidal wave of mud, money, and "dirty tricks" (use of strong-arm fear tactics by employers)
- Election returns – McKinley triumphed decisively:
 - 271 to 176 in Electoral College
 - 7,102,246 to 6,492,559 in popular vote
 - Driven by fear and excitement, an unprecedented outpouring of voters flocked to polls
 - McKinley ran strong in populous East, carrying every county of New England and in upper Mississippi Valley
 - Bryan's states concentrated in debt-burdened South and trans-Mississippi West (see Map 26.6)

XVII. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders (cont.)

- Free-silver election of 1896 perhaps most significant political turning point since Lincoln's victories in 1860 and 1864:
 - Despite Bryan's strength in South and West:
 - Results vividly demonstrated his lack of appeal to the unmortgaged farmer and the eastern urban laborer
 - Many wage earners in East voted for their jobs and full dinner pails—
 - » threatened by free silver, free trade, fireless factories
 - » Living on a fixed wage, factory workers had no reason to favor inflation, which was heart of Bryanites's program

XVII. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders (cont.)

- Bryan-McKinley battle heralded advent of new era in American politics:
 - Underprivileged many against privileged few,
 - Of indebted backcountry against city,
 - Of agrarians against industrialists,
 - Of Main Street against Wall Street,
 - Of the nobodies against the somebodies
- Outcome a resounding win for big business, big cities, middle-class values, and financial conservatism
- 1896 = last effort to win entirely by farming vote

[illegible]

XVII. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders (cont.)

- Grand Old Party's smashing victory of 1896:

- Heralded a Republican grip on White House for next 16 years
- McKinley's election imparted new character to political system with **fourth party system**:
 - Diminishing voter participation in elections
 - Weakening of party organizations
 - Money question and civil-service reform faded as issues
 - Replaced by concern for industrial regulation and welfare of labor
 - Contrast with "third party system" (1860-1896) of high voter turnouts and close contests between Democrats and Republicans

[illegible]

[illegible]

XVIII. Republican Stand-pattism Enthroned

- McKinley took inaugural oath in 1897:

- Cautious, conservative nature caused him to shy away from reform
 - Business given a free rein
 - Trusts allowed to develop without serious restraints
- Tariff issue forced itself to forefront:
 - Wilson-Gorman law not raising enough revenue to cover annual Treasury deficits
 - Trusts thought they had right to additional tariff protection because of their contributions to Hanna's war chest

XVIII. Republican Stand-pattism Enthroned (cont.)

- **Dingley Tariff Bill jammed through House in 1897 under “Czar” Reed**
 - Proposed rates high, but not enough to satisfy lobbyists who descended upon Senate
 - Over 850 amendments tacked onto overburdened bill
 - Resulting patchwork established average rates at 46.5%:
 - » Substantially higher than Democratic Wilson-Gorman Act of 1894
 - » Income categories even higher than McKinley Act of 1890 (See chart in Appendix)

[illegible]

XVIII. Republican Stand-pattism Enthroned (cont.)

- Prosperity began to return in 1897, first year of McKinley's term:
 - Depression (1893) had run its course
 - Farm prices rose; wheels of industry resumed
 - Republicans claimed credit for prosperity
 - **Gold Standard Act** 1900, passed over last-ditch silverite opposition:
 - Provided paper currency be redeemed freely in gold
 - Discoveries brought huge quantities of gold onto world markets
 - As did perfected cheap cyanide process for extracting gold from low-grade ore

XVIII. Republican Stand-pattism Enthroned (cont.)

- Moderate inflation took care of currency needs of expanding nation as its circulatory system greatly improved
- Tide of “silver heresy” rapidly receded
- “Popocratic” fish left gasping high & dry on golden-sanded beach

CHRONOLOGY

ca. 1200-1800	Some Indian peoples move onto Great Plains	1809-1890	North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming admitted to Union
1858	Pikes Peak gold rush	1896	Congress Bureau declares frontier line ended
1859	Nevada Comstock Lode discovered		Emergence of People's party (Populists)
1860	Homestead Act		Battle of Wounded Knee
1863	San Joaquin discovery	1891	Construction of Great Northern Railroad begins
1864	Nevada admitted to Union	1892	Popular party candidate James B. Weaver polls more than 1 million votes in presidential election
1867	Northern Plains organized	1893	Frederick Jackson Turner publishes "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"
1876	Battle of the Little Bighorn	1894	"Coney's Army" marches on Washington following dollar
1879	San Francisco	1896	Utah admitted to Union
1880	Historic Shoshone battles published in Century of Discovery	1897	McKinley defeats Bryan for presidency
1881	Federal government outlines Indian New Deal	1898	Douglas Smith Act
1882	Canadian Pacific Railway first transcontinental rail line, completed across Canada	1900	Gold Standard Act
1883-1889	Local chapters of Farmers' Alliance formed	1901	Oklahoma admitted to Union
1887	Elmer Sweeney Act	1904	Indians granted U.S. citizenship
1888	Oklahoma opened to U.S. citizen settlement	1906	Indian Reorganization Act

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